

For Immediate Release
20 April 1995

FACT FINDING REPORT OF THE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TASK FORCE

Chairman of the task force, Professor Peter N. Dobson, Jr., Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs will brief the media on the findings.

Venue: HKUST Exposition Hall
Date: Friday, 21 April 1995
Time: 3 PM

Direct inquiries to the Office of Public Affairs:

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The University extends its sympathy to the parents of Richard Leung Wai-Cheuk for the loss of their son. We are working with the family to assist them in their time of sorrow.

On Tuesday night, April 4, at about 11:25 PM, a research assistant (RA) was working in a Chemistry laboratory when he accidentally caused two bottles of chemicals to break. The RA was affected by the irritating vapors and began coughing. He left the room and went into a lab across the corridor to report to his supervising professor. On seeing the RA, the professor immediately took him into the common corridor away from the laboratory (with the spilt chemicals) to stand by a window and get some fresh air.

By this time, persons nearby experienced the irritant effects from the spill and quickly evacuated the labs. University Security was called at 11:28 PM and 999 was called at 11:33 PM.

Postgraduate student, Richard Leung Wai-Cheuk, while aware of the spill problem and experiencing the irritant effects, went towards the lab spill. He later informed his professor that he had done so to see if anyone had required assistance and that he had decided to wash his eyes out in a sink, unfortunately, in the lab where the spill had occurred.

At 11:37 PM, the area was cordoned off, emergency ventilation switches were activated, and chemical spill control kit materials were used to collect and clean up the spill. The spill was containerized and transported to the Safety and Environmental Protection Office (SEPO) lab for temporary storage.

Three persons went by ambulance at 11:50 PM to United Christian Hospital. Two were later discharged. Leung was under constant medical observation, did fine, but began to develop problems early Wednesday morning. He was immediately placed under intensive care. His professors and fellow postgraduate students visited him several times on that day. The Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Science, the Head of Chemistry, the Director of Student Affairs, and a Student Counselor spent many hours with the patient, the family, and the attending physicians. Despite intensive care, Leung's condition deteriorated further and he passed away late Wednesday night.

The Vice-Chancellor has appointed a task force to carry out an inquiry. The task force is chaired by Professor Peter N. Dobson, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

Office of Public Affairs
6 April 1995